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Letter dated 31 May 2011 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Thailand to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Economic and Social Council

I have the honour to request that the attached report of the Asia-Pacific regional preparatory meeting on the theme "Education and the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals" be circulated as a document of the Economic and Social Council for consideration at its 2011 substantive session, under item 2 (b) of the provisional agenda (see annex).

The meeting was held on 24 March 2011, in Jomtien, Thailand, in the context of the Tenth Meeting of the High-level Group on Education for All, in preparation for the annual ministerial review of the Economic and Social Council, which will focus on education.

The regional preparatory meeting was a notable effort in the tradition of the World Conference on Education for All, which also took place in Jomtien in 1990. Thailand believes that the report will be a valuable contribution to the discussions at the upcoming annual ministerial review in Geneva.

(*Signed*) Jakkrit **Srivali**
Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

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Annex to the letter dated 31 May 2011 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Thailand to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Economic and Social Council

Report of the regional preparatory meeting for Asia and the Pacific on the theme "Education and the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals" for the 2011 annual ministerial review of the Economic and Social Council

Summary

As part of the annual ministerial review of the Economic and Social Council, a regional preparatory meeting on the theme "Education and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals" was held on 24 March 2011 in Chonburi, Thailand, in preparation for the 2011 annual ministerial review, which will focus on education. The Economic and Social Council high-level regional preparatory meeting for Asia and the Pacific took place in the context of the Tenth Meeting of the High-level Group on Education for All (Jomtien, 22-24 March 2011) and was hosted by the Government of Thailand, in cooperation with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.

The high-level regional meeting brought together ministers from the region, education practitioners, development partners, civil society representatives and experts to identify integrated approaches and concrete policy measures that the Council can promote in the context of the annual ministerial review, and more particularly on the role education can play in contributing to the realization of all the Millennium Development Goals.

Highlights from the discussions

The following key messages emerged from the discussion:

Progress in the Asia Pacific region on the education-related Millennium Development Goals and Education for All goals:

- Progress towards education goals is varied in the region. While much progress has been made in terms of enrolment, late entry into school and early dropout remain major problems.
- The region as a whole is an early achiever for a number of indicators, such as reducing gender disparities in primary and tertiary education. The region is also on track to achieve three other important targets: gender parity in secondary education, ensuring universal access of children to primary school and halving the proportion of people living below the poverty line.
- The region has made slow progress in ensuring that girls and boys reach the last grade of primary education, reducing child mortality and improving maternal health and providing basic sanitation.

Education and poverty reduction (Millennium Development Goal 1)

- Countries need an educated population to reduce poverty, as evidenced by the fact that one additional year of schooling increases a person's wage by 5 to 10 per cent.
- Inequalities persist within countries regarding the average number of years of schooling, particularly between the richest and poorest, and between boys and girls, with the worst off often being poor, rural girls.
- Education is the key to an innovation economy and growth begins with education. Education can drive entrepreneurship and employability.
- Education is changing to adapt to increasing globalization and technological innovation. New skills are required to reflect the shift from industrial to knowledge economies and the roles of the public and private sector are adjusting in facilitating and regulating education.

Education and health (Millennium Development Goals 4, 5 and 6)

- Direct links between education and Millennium Development Goals 4, 5 and 6 go both ways. Education is the best investment that can be made to achieve these goals, and there are intergenerational benefits of education, particularly with girls, who when educated are more likely to seek professional health care and services, especially during childbirth, and promote health care for their children.
- The challenges to progress in the health- and education-related development goals include inequalities and disparities between urban and rural areas, with less developed areas lagging far behind on indicators and experiencing lower quality health care and poorer access to health services. Additionally, progress is challenged by undernourishment among children and the high incidence of HIV/AIDS.
- Young people are a significant demographic group in the region, who are seeking information and services linked to their physical and emotional needs; consequently, there is a clear and urgent need to address young people's right to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health education and services.

Education and sustainable development (Millennium Development Goal 7)

- An educated population is essential for sustainable development in any country. Democratic processes involve public participation and Governments should respond to the demands of the people for sustainable development.
- The first half of the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development has shown that education for sustainable development is not only about school education but also covers a wide range of actions beyond the education sector. It involves partnerships forged between different key stakeholders.
- Internationally agreed development goals highlight the use of all modes of learning, the informal as well as the formal sectors in education, and lifelong learning, which is becoming increasingly important in a world characterized by rapid change. Learning and education are at the core of coping with and addressing changing situations.

I. Introduction

1. In July 2011, the Economic and Social Council will hold its fifth annual ministerial review in Geneva. The review will focus on "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to education".

2. On 24 March 2011, a regional preparatory meeting for Asia and the Pacific was hosted by the Government of Thailand, in cooperation with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

3. The meeting brought together a diverse group of Government representatives, regional stakeholders, experts from the United Nations system and other international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academia and the private sector. The meeting provided an important opportunity for the Asia and Pacific countries to contribute to the annual ministerial review, including by sharing best practices and lessons learned.

II. Proceedings of the regional preparatory meeting

A. Opening session

Welcoming remarks

4. Chinnaworn Boonyakiat, Minister of Education of Thailand, expressed his pleasure at the convening of the meeting and extended a warm welcome to all the delegates from Governments of the region, relevant United Nations organizations and academic institutions both at home and abroad, as well as representatives of NGOs.

5. Mr. Boonyakiat highlighted Thailand's efforts in regard to education and the adoption of the goals and targets of the Millennium Development Goals, and welcomed the ensuing consultations as a useful contribution to the success of the Economic and Social Council and the 2011 annual ministerial review in Geneva.

1. Opening remarks

6. In his introductory remarks, Abulkalam Abdul Momen, Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council, emphasized that technology is rapidly changing today's world, making it smaller but at the same time also leading to higher expectations. The current global financial architecture constitutes an impediment, especially for least developed countries and small island developing States in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, including the education-related goals. He cautioned that the impressive picture of global progress on the education targets of Goals 2 and 3 hides large differences both between and within countries as well as the issue of education quality. It was pointed out in particular that poor education outcomes have terribly pernicious effects on factors such as poverty, health, gender equality and the environment, but fortunately, the opposite is also true.

7. Most notably, Mr. Momen pointed out in regard to disparities in progress towards Goal 2 for universal education, that there are mixed results for South and West Asia and East Asia and the Pacific. The large number of those out of school, the disproportionate impacts on minority, ethnic and tribal groups, adult illiteracy, and gender disparities remain obstacles, particularly in South and West Asia. Furthermore, poor-quality education, linked in large part to the acute shortage of qualified teachers, jeopardizes the future of young children by increasing the risk of lifelong illiteracy and poverty. Ambassador Momen highlighted that education is the key to reaching all the other Millennium Development Goals. For example, in regard to education and poverty, a recent study was cited that showed that each additional year of schooling adds an extra 10 per cent to an average person's earnings and it can lift average annual gross domestic product by 0.37 per cent. In addition, Mr. Momen mentioned the positive links between education and women's empowerment, including how this contributes to the ability of women to care for their children, to the prevention and treatment of lethal diseases such as HIV/AIDS and to environmental sustainability.

8. He concluded by saying that the discussions during the regional meeting would provide an important input into the Economic and Social Council annual ministerial review session in July and will assist in formulating the Ministerial Declaration to be adopted by the Council.

9. Thomas Stelzer, Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, began by providing an overview of the progress made in advancing the education-related goals in the Asia-Pacific region. He noted that progress was as varied as the region itself. While much progress had been made in terms of enrolment, late entry into school and early dropout remained a major problem, particularly in East Asia and the Pacific. Mr. Stelzer stressed that enrolment should not be confused with learning, and highlighted that poor education results do not simply disappear. Illiteracy and a mismatch between skills and what is demanded in the job market continue to pose a challenge during adulthood. It was intimated that for its part, the Economic and Social Council will focus in 2012 on ways to spur job creation by making graduates more workforce-ready, together with demand-side measures such as creating more flexible labour markets.

10. Mr. Stelzer highlighted that education is not only a right in itself; it is also an important tool for achieving other Goals such as health, and for transitioning to a green economy. According to Mr. Stelzer, currently the "education paradox" is more pronounced than ever — with education serving equally as a high-speed escalator for those with it, and as a mighty roadblock for those without it. In conclusion, Mr. Stelzer gave a call to action, reminding participants of the steep cost of inaction.

11. Dr. Nagesh Kumar, Acting Deputy Executive Secretary and Chief of the Macroeconomic Policy and Development Division of the Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific, highlighted that most success towards meeting the development goals has occurred in respect to poverty reduction, the provision of universal primary education, reducing gender disparities in primary and tertiary education, reducing HIV prevalence, stopping the spread of tuberculosis, reducing the emissions of ozone-depleting substances, and increasing the proportion of people with access to potable water. Dr. Kumar pointed out, though, the lack of progress in key areas such as reducing hunger, ensuring completion of primary

education, reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, and providing basic sanitation, which highlight that variations in achievement exist across goals and indicators. Of significance as well, are the variations that exist across countries and subregions in terms of achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, with South-East and East Asia, in general, showing greater progress than South Asia and the Pacific islands.

12. In the light of those issues, Dr. Kumar stressed the importance of putting poverty reduction and Millennium Development Goal achievement at the centre of the development strategy in the region, and encouraged viewing the achievement of the Goals as a critical part of the strategy to promote growth itself rather than as a social welfare scheme. Dr. Kumar recommended that all the policies that help to close these gaps and foster inclusive development be adopted by Governments. In conclusion, Dr. Kumar emphasized the continuing relevance of global partnership, particularly for assisting the least developed countries in closing the Millennium Development Goal gaps, the need to enhance overseas development assistance, the increasing importance of South-South cooperation, and the role that greater connectivity and regional economic integration can play in making the region more resilient to further crises and bolstering the capacity of the poorest countries to achieve the Goals. ESCAP is assisting the region in developing elements of a regional financial architecture for closing the development gaps. Dr. Kumar pointed out that regional dialogues such as this are important for shaping a coordinated regional perspective and sharing of development experiences.

2. Presentation and setting the stage

13. Dr. Gwang-Jo Kim, Director of the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Regional Bureau for Education, Bangkok, presented on the topic "A perspective on progress towards the education Millennium Development Goals in Asia and the Pacific", in which an overview was provided of the progress made by the region on the education-related Millennium Development Goals and Education for All goals, and on education's contribution to the progress of the other Millennium Development Goals.

14. Dr. Kim provided a brief background on the Asia-Pacific region, commenting that it is a diverse region that contains the world's most populous countries, China and India, as well as many small island States, and, despite its growth and development, faces the persistent issues of poverty, income inequality and low life expectancy. In relation to achieving the Millennium Development Goals, progress in the region is mixed, with success as a whole in achieving a number of indicators, such as reducing gender disparities in primary education, stopping the spread of HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis, achieving progress with regard to biodiversity, reducing the consumption of ozone-depleting substances, and halving the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water, as well as being on track to halving the proportion of people living below the poverty line, ensuring universal access of children to primary school and gender parity in secondary education.

15. Despite this success, the region has experienced slow progress in preventing hunger, ensuring completion of primary education (Millennium Development Goal 2), reducing child mortality, improving maternal health and providing basic sanitation and uneven progress towards achieving gender parity in completion rates (Millennium Development Goal 3), especially in South Asia and the least developed countries in the region. In regard to progress on Goal 2, Dr. Kim highlighted that,

overall for the region, there are more children in school, progress has been made in expanding basic education and there is a growing focus on secondary education. However, progress towards universal primary education is experienced unevenly, particularly in conflict-affected countries such as Afghanistan. Furthermore, in order to achieve universal primary education, the region must address the slowing down of growth in enrolment rates and the high numbers of children still out of school. Policy solutions must be sought to reduce late entry, repetition and dropout, particularly among the marginalized groups, with new approaches that are better tailored and targeted to these groups.

16. Dr. Kim then illustrated how universal primary education is linked to the other Education for All goals, emphasizing that free and compulsory primary education is a fundamental human right enshrined in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and reaffirmed by the international community in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990 and in Dakar in 2000. The Education for All goals express a comprehensive view of education, recognizing that universal primary education is dependent upon policies and progress across all levels of education and various delivery modalities, both formal and non-formal. Thus, progress, or the lack of it, in meeting the goal of universal primary education must be viewed in the context of progress in the other Education for All goals.

B. Session I: Education and Poverty Reduction (Millennium Development Goal 1)

1. Panellist presentations

17. Elizabeth King, Director of Education of the Human Development Network of the World Bank, commenced her presentation by addressing the question of why we should invest in education, offering in her answer that one additional year of schooling increases a person's wage by 5 to 10 per cent, as well as the fact that one additional year in average education of women reduces child mortality by 9.5 per cent.

18. Ms. King emphasized that as the world is changing there is increasing need to invest in people's knowledge and skills to improve lives, to reduce poverty and to promote development. This becomes evident in the light of global trends such as the geographic distribution of the world's population, with the vast majority residing in Asia and the developing world by 2050, or the rapid growth in mobile phone and Internet users. There is increasing demand for different skills, such as non-routine analytic and non-routine interactive skills.

19. Ms. King pointed out that poverty has significantly declined in Asia, and that, using the broader poverty measure of $2 per day, one third of the total developing world population (2 billion people) will be living in poverty in 2015. However, the evidence suggests that there remain disparities across the region. Stressing the need to make Learning for All a reality, Ms. King referred again to the inequalities within countries regarding average number of years of schooling, in particular between the richest and poorest, and between boys and girls.

20. Ms. King concluded by emphasizing the necessity to invest early, to invest smartly, including by building job-relevant skills and encouraging entrepreneurship and innovation, and to invest for all. The imperative of building a high-quality

knowledge base was emphasized, and includes at the foundation, infrastructure and personnel in the policy domains (e.g., learning assessment and information management), then service delivery subsystems (e.g., early childhood development, school health, and workforce development), and, at the top, Learning for all.

21. Ashutosh Chadha, Director of the Strategic Education Initiative, Asia-Pacific region, Intel, began with a quote by Kinelev, "the creation of an educational system capable of preparing people to live in the changing world is one of the crucial tasks of modern society".

22. He then illustrated the historical progress of global transformation, noting that from 1950 to 2000 (a period of 50 years) global GDP doubled. This trend demonstrates that it is innovation that is at the heart of the growth. Mr. Chadha asked the question: where does innovation begin? He pointed out that the road to the innovation economy and growth undeniably begins with education. He stressed that education needs to be the focus in order to drive entrepreneurship and employability, and to also address the issue of increasing levels of the educated unemployed. The issue arises of whether the education that is provided should remain the same as it was in the past.

23. According to Mr. Chadha, the changing shape of society, from resource-based to knowledge-based, refers to a move to a knowledge economy and/or imagination economy, which has been one area in which many economies have grown. These economies, though, have also simultaneously sought to address the challenges in education regarding issues of quality, assessment of students and learning outcomes, and integrating students as part of the larger economy.

24. It was suggested that a systemic approach for educational transformation is needed, one in which true public-private partnerships with Governments, NGOs, the private sector and the general community work together to address these challenges. Consideration must be given as well to the role of technology in addressing the areas of equity, accessibility, and the lack of quality teachers. Mr. Chadha detailed Intel's experiences in multiple countries over the years which have shown that effective transformation requires a systemic approach that addresses five specific components: policy; research and evaluation; curriculum assessment; professional development; and information communications technology. Intel has experienced success in such approaches, including enhancing the technical and social skills of hearing-impaired children from a low-income, ethnic minority community in Lam Dong Province in Viet Nam, and funding and facilitating training on social and entrepreneurship development and empowerment for a young Muslim woman in a remote village in the State of Kerala in India.

25. Dr. Jose Roberto Guevara, President of the Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education, representing a 200-member regional network, focused his presentation on the important role of civil society in advancing the education-related Millennium Development Goals. Dr. Guevara emphasized a lack of political commitment and a silo mentality as the key challenges in advancing the education goals.

26. Using examples from their work in various communities, Dr. Guevara observed that in a globalized world education needed to not only provide students with the relevant facts but also a broader understanding of how individual actions are affected and impact the global picture. Ensuring a better understanding and

greater awareness of the impact of individual decisions on the rest of the world through education is important both in developing and developed countries. Equally important is that knowledge requires constant updating. This point was illustrated by an example of the Association's work in adult education in Bhutan, which helped to reform the farming process through developing an innovative literacy education programme.

27. In closing, Dr. Guevara recognized that education is often looked at as the glue which holds a society together. Moreover, Dr. Guevara added that this static picture of glue, which hardens over time, is no longer timely and that in a rapidly changing world what is needed is an education that is flexible, ensuring participation and ownership in decision-making processes.

2. Open discussion

28. The representative of Indonesia remarked that the increased focus on education can increase income, offering as an example the country's improved position in the poverty rating partially by devoting attention to education. It was additionally highlighted that Indonesia pays particular attention to the marginalized, providing a minimum of 20 per cent of university places to poor families, in addition to scholarships for poor students. The useful role of conditional cash transfers, to support life skills, plus additional cash transfers for health programmes were mentioned as well. It was pointed out that the five dimensions of education outlined by Intel are the same as the priorities of Indonesia.

29. The representative of the Republic of Korea commented on the valuable lessons that can be taken from focusing on the links between war and conflict, poverty, and education, and highlighted in particular the recent Education for All Global Monitoring Report on the theme of education in countries emerging from conflict. The representative expressed that education has been high on their agenda, with research conducted with the private sector on comparative studies with the Republic of Korea and other developing countries, which highlights the important role of basic education for human development. Step by step, education has coincided with industrial development. Furthermore, women and girls education has contributed to the demand for women as workers. The representative concluded by adding that the current Government is committed to green growth, as it is linked to education.

30. The representative of the Philippines remarked on the need to bring the business sector to the table and increase employer sponsored training, particularly of youth who have no employment experience. Expanded employer training can address this lack of the necessary experience needed for applying for jobs. It was suggested, in general, that consideration be given to what is being done in the global context.

31. Mr. Chadha responded on the parallel role of the business sector, to work in part through philanthropy, and in part due to business imperatives. It was emphasized that business in many instances can help in assessment of required skills, as well as creating the shared resolve to develop policy initiatives.

32. Ms. King noted that in the twenty-first century, not only reading and math, but also other skills such as non-cognitive skills, are required. Abilities such as teamwork and communication are often not sufficiently taught nor are they the focus

of measuring learning outcomes. Initiatives are currently under way, by the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and the World Bank, to develop a methodology for measuring these competencies.

33. Dr. Guevara remarked on the problem of ministries operating in silos, and emphasized that the green economy and the need for green skills cannot be isolated but should be the focus of climate change education. Such education should not just focus on teaching people to adapt to climate-specific challenges but also to address other possible future challenges.

34. Nikhil Seth, Director of the Office for Economic and Social Council Support and Coordination of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, and session moderator, remarked on the important role that the private sector must play, especially in the light of the unrealistic expectation that Governments are going to deliver with zero-growth budgets.

35. Mr. Momen commented that in Bangladesh, the private sector is very much involved in primary and tertiary education. The MDG Summit highlighted that resource constraints persist as well as the increasing importance of innovation technology to education. Mr. Momen intimated that success stories exist in which political commitment and sustained effort have played a significant part in progress. However, it was also recognized that large gaps still exist in education financing, and there is a need to enhance global awareness to achieve the goals.

C. Session II: Education and Health (Millennium Development Goals 4, 5 and 6)

1. Introduction by the Chair

36. Mr. Boonyakiat, Chair of the session, began by remarking that while the region has made progress with respect to many of the Millennium Development Goals, it is lagging behind in Goals 4 and 5. It was emphasized that education can make a difference in maternal health and child health, including immunization, but that the region is not, in general, doing very well. Mr. Boonyakiat further recognized that increased budgets do not always make a difference, but education should use its existing resources more efficiently and effectively.

2. Panellist presentations

37. Nurul Islam Nahid, Minister of Education of Bangladesh, began by highlighting the multiple links and benefits of education to the advancement of women and girls, and how Bangladesh has made progress in educating girls since its independence, which has played an important role in child and maternal health outcomes. Among those highlighted were the link between a mother's education and lower child mortality rates, the key role of education in addressing violence against women, as there is evidence that the presence of more educated children in the household acts as a restraint. Additionally, Mr. Nahid pointed out that educated girls tend to delay marriage, are more likely to delay childbirth and more likely to seek care for childbirth and for children. In particular, Bangladesh has found a correlation between child labour and the educational attainment of mothers, with 6 per cent higher incidence of child labour in households with mothers with no education

compared to those with mothers with primary education, and even higher in comparison those with mothers with secondary education.

38. Mr. Nahid further highlighted that Bangladesh has already achieved gender parity in primary and secondary school enrolment, and that the Constitution recognizes the right to education as a key State principle. The national education policy addresses the right of children and measures have been taken to reach the most vulnerable, including the provision of stipends for all girls in secondary schools and for all poor children in primary schools, for school meals in deprived areas, and the provision of free text books for all children in primary and secondary levels. Mr. Nahid illustrated the positive results of such measures, including raising primary net enrolment rates to around 90 per cent and raising literacy rates from 36 per cent in 1991 to more than 50 per cent in 2008.

39. Mr. Nahid addressed the challenges related to health and education in Bangladesh, including low gross enrolment rates, low completion rates, and lower ratios of girls in tertiary education. Additionally, Bangladesh has one of the highest rates of childbirth among adolescent girls worldwide (although the number of births to adolescent mothers has reduced by one quarter in the last 25 years). Adolescent motherhood is common in rural areas, leading to higher risks of pregnancy complications, low-birthweight babies, high maternal mortality and malnutrition, which remain common concerns.

40. Mr. Nahid concluded that, in the light of such progress and developments, Bangladesh aims to be a middle-income country by 2021.

41. Dr. Wang Dinghua, Deputy Director of Basic Education of the Ministry of Education of China, began by highlighting that China is on track to achieve the health-related Millennium Development Goals and other targets that China has set for itself. With a population of 1.3 billion, including a large number of children, China's progress will have a large impact on the global achievement of Millennium Development Goal indicators. Dr. Dinghua specifically detailed how China has made progress in the past two decades in lowering the under-five mortality rate and the child mortality rate, thus achieving the Millennium Development Goal 4 target. In particular, from 1991-2008, the under-five mortality rate dropped by 62 per cent in urban areas and 68 per cent in rural areas, and in 1991 it was 2.4 times higher in rural than urban areas, whereas in 2008, this ratio decreased to 1.9. Dr. Dinghua further recognized that China has achieved the Millennium Development Goal 5 target on maternal mortality rates as well.

42. The various challenges to progress in the health- and education-related development goals was also depicted by Dr. Dinghua, including inequalities and disparities between urban and rural areas, with less developed areas lagging far behind on indicators and experiencing lower quality health care and poorer access to, and uptake of, health services. Additionally, progress is challenged by undernourishment among children, and the high incidence of HIV: China has 900,000 people living with HIV.

43. Dr. Dinghua emphasized several Government-initiated reforms and policies that have been established to address those challenges. These consist of a series of reforms to reduce disparities in public health services and schools, including improving grass-roots health-care services, supporting the establishment of a comprehensive medical system, a national essential medical system, and a pilot

hospital reform. Additionally, in 2010 the Government of China launched a medium- and long-term strategic outline for education reform and development, including quality and quantity standards, which will guide public reforms on education over the next 10 years.

44. It was further emphasized that by 2020 China will realize the modernization of education. This includes providing basic education to help address the changing environment, addressing quality enhancement and equity promotion by reforming weak schools, initiating exchanges of teachers, taking good care of vulnerable groups to ensure that poor families send and keep kids in school, protecting children with disabilities, ensuring that children of migrant workers enjoy equal access to education and establishing policy for ethnic minority groups. Additionally, Dr. Dinghua accentuated the Government's efforts in establishing a national programme on school construction and improvement to aid in guaranteeing availability of clean drinking water to meet the Millennium Development Goal on water and sanitation. Moreover, the Government is subsidizing money for supporting children, is emphasizing and improving school feeding programmes to address undernourished students, and is offering subsidies to boarding students through central and provincial funds. China is taking measures, as well, in schools to address HIV by enhancing the synergy with curriculum at middle schools, mobile lectures for middle and high school students, websites for knowledge on prevention, and by setting requirements and standards to provide interventions and to publicize knowledge and provide education. Furthermore, physical exercise is emphasized to make students strong to resist disease, including one hour of physical exercise per day and adequate sleep (10 hours for primary school students and 9 hours for secondary school students).

45. To promote progress on these and all development indicators, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Hygiene jointly host consultations to measure progress and outcomes, rewarding those who do well, and they have established cascading training to share experiences.

46. Milinda Rajapaksha, Coordinator of the South Asia Regional Youth Network of the International Planned Parenthood Federation, commented that like many others his first exposure to health and sexual education was in grades 9 and 11 and it was very limited due to low teacher capacity and low interest in conveying the information. Mr. Rajapaksha emphasized that as young people — who comprise a significant one third of the world's population — grow and develop, they are looking for more information and services emerging from their physical and emotional needs, and that consequently there is a clear and urgent need to address young people's right to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services, information, and health care.

47. Regarding India more specifically, Mr. Rajapaksha highlighted that by the age of 18, 28 per cent of Indian women will have given birth to a child and 49 per cent will be married. Of the estimated 2.5 million people in India who are HIV-positive, 50 per cent of all new infections take place among young people between 15 and 24 years of age. Significantly, the Population Council of India's National Study on "Youth in India" (2006-2007) showed that of a sample population of over 50,000 young people, only 15 per cent had access to information from their parents or teachers on any kind of sexuality education. Additionally, almost 73 per cent of

young girls in India have misconceptions about the modes of HIV transmission and comprehensive sexuality education is banned in seven states across the country.

48. Mr. Rajapaksha stressed that according to the UNICEF report *The State of the World's Children 2011, Adolescence: An Age of Opportunity*, investing now in the world's 1.2 billion adolescents aged 10 to 19 can break entrenched cycles of poverty and inequity. The UNICEF report also highlights a few other important points relating to young people, such as the fact that, on the global level, girls still lag behind boys in secondary school attendance, that without education adolescents are more likely to be unable to negotiate decision-making, change their life circumstances, and are likely to remain marginalized. They would find it more difficult to develop the knowledge and skills needed to navigate the risks of exploitation, abuse and violence that are highest during the second decade of life. Mr. Rajapaksha further emphasized that when adolescents are reached successfully, they can be at the forefront of changes that benefit themselves and society.

49. According to Mr. Rajapaksha, comprehensive sexuality education refers to the access to information and education about sexuality and the knowledge and skills necessary to enjoy sexuality in a healthy and positive way. Comprehensive sexuality education must include information on gender, sexual and reproductive health and rights, HIV and AIDS, sexual citizenship, pleasure, violence, diversity and relationships. Among the positive examples already achieved included the International Planned Parenthood Federation member associations in Nepal's successful inclusion of a manual on comprehensive sexuality education in the teacher's training manual, as well as the network created between the Family Planning Association in Nepal, various civil organizations, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, the media, as well as young people who were part of the whole process from planning to evaluation.

50. Mr. Rajapaksha concluded that investing in quality education involves ensuring that schools are safe spaces, and that all young people have the opportunity, both in and out of school, for accessing comprehensive sexuality education which integrates HIV prevention, human rights, gender equity and an understanding of sexuality and well-being.

3. Open discussion

51. A representative of UNFPA commented that power relationships are such that attention needs to be paid as well to men, and the role of fathers and husbands in making decisions on boys' and girls' education. How fathers can be reached, especially after they have already completed their own education, is a difficult issue that must be considered alongside the cooperative role of stakeholders from multiple sectors in reaching men on these terms. Additionally, there is a need for advocates to address concerns about whether sexuality education leads to sexual promiscuity, for which there is currently no evidence. It was suggested that inter-ministerial cooperation is required, particularly in the area of school health. Furthermore, while more teachers are being trained in comprehensive sexuality education, teachers are still not confident to talk about these things in classrooms, therefore it was suggested that health providers can help to talk about some of these issues in a more personal setting. Thus, there is a need to tap into health providers as a potential source of health education as well.

52. A representative of the World Food Programme commented that because malnutrition is a major reason limiting children's ability to learn, school feeding programmes and nutrition need to be further emphasized. It was highlighted, for instance, that deworming and micronutrient fortification are very important low-cost interventions which can greatly improve learning results. Bangladesh is one country where the use of micronutrient-fortified solutions in school systems has helped to halve malnutrition, exemplifying how school systems are an excellent distribution network for this important health intervention.

53. Further comments were made by the representative of Indonesia regarding sexual education as discussed in the context of family planning, and how Indonesia has in this way worked hard to reduce the population growth rate. To improve the quality of education for those hard to reach, Indonesia is working together with madrassas in a programme funded by the Government of Australia, which includes as an objective to delay the early marriage of girls, particularly those in traditional families. Additionally, Indonesia's use of conditional cash transfers was based on students attending school for at least 75 per cent of the time, no early marriages and good grades. The Government is committed to 5 per cent of the national budget allotted to health and 20 per cent to education, while recognizing that funding is not the only solution.

54. Mr. Nahid informed that Bangladesh did not only increase enrolment but also reduced dropout, however, the number of children still not having access to school remains large. He noted that providing incentives can help to encourage the take up of education and health programmes, as exemplified by joint initiatives with UNICEF to provide additional incentives for children and to small schools in remote areas. Exploring innovative funding was also identified as important. It was further highlighted that Bangladesh has focused on rural and urban areas, which is a necessary part of what schools should do. Mr. Nahid additionally suggested that such initiatives involve the community rather than being Government-owned. Mr. Nahid highlighted that within the religious sector, mosques have worked together with the Information Ministry on HIV/AIDS campaigns, which could stand as a good model for other countries. Overall, Mr. Nahid emphasized raising awareness as a primary imperative, as well as adopting cross-sectoral approaches and alliances.

55. Mr. Chadha, emphasized the need to focus on sexuality education both in the urban and rural populations. He earmarked school feeding programmes as important to encourage children's attendance at school, and cited the example of such programmes in India. However, due to the scale of India's programme, the quality of the food provided suffered, which offers a lesson regarding the need to involve the community in running these programmes versus the Government. Mr. Chadha further commented that it would be useful to provide a regular assessment of the health of children, as this can restrict learning. Annual health check-ups for children should be made mandatory.

56. The representative of Japan commented on the links between global health and education policy, emphasizing the need to address persistent issues of maternal health, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, as well as the imperative for access to skilled health providers.

57. Dr. Dinghua emphasized that to realize the Millennium Development Goals, each country must have different measures, but that there are three priorities which all should consider, namely: budget; expertise; and mechanisms (such as piloting).

To further illustrate, Dr Dinghua explained that budgeting for education, as well as for sanitation and HIV prevention, was included in Chinese legislation as adopted through a political commitment in which the central Government signed a contract with the local government, which was then held accountable for progress on these matters with funding subject to performance assessments. In terms of expertise, China emphasized capacity-building and increased awareness of teachers. With regard to mechanisms, emphasis was placed on the utility of piloting, and of using model schools as examples, as well as establishing partnerships with different provinces to share experiences.

58. A representative of UNESCO commented on the necessity for policies to be based on evidence, and emphasized the technical guidance in sexual and reproductive health that has been prepared for the region. The cost-effectiveness of sexuality education was also recognized.

4. Keynote address by Kishore Singh, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education

59. In his keynote address, Mr. Singh declared poverty as the biggest challenge of our times: the magnitude of the challenge is indicated by the fact that the number of people victims of extreme poverty surpasses one billion — a vast number of them living in the Asia and the Pacific region. This should be taken into account when the Millennium Development Goals are considered. Mr. Singh emphasized that all of the Millennium Development Goals are underpinned by human rights, and therefore human rights present us the framework for achieving the Goals.

60. Mr. Singh noted that poverty is linked to the right to development, and that the MDG Summit outcome document and the Millennium Declaration specifically highlighted the right to development. He also pointed out that poverty is multidimensional, bearing close interlinkages with Millennium Development Goals 1, 2, 3, with links to all eight goals. The intergenerational transmission of poverty was recognized, as well as the role of education in preventing such a transmission. Mr. Singh further emphasized the right to primary education as a fundamental and inalienable right. In many countries, the right to basic education has been adopted and put into law but its practical realization remains the challenge.

61. In closing, Mr. Singh reiterated the importance of harmonizing the goals with rights, which has been the goal of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Furthermore, the example of Thailand's experiences in progress on achieving the Millennium Development Goals and the resulting findings related to the reduction of poverty by 4 per cent are useful lessons learned. Lastly, Mr. Singh observed that quality education is still an area of concern and should be treated as a right, as is the case in the Philippines.

5. Closing remarks

62. The Chair of the session, Mr. Boonyakiat, thanked the panellists and participants for the presentations and discussion, the outcomes of which he said will be a useful addition to the deliberations of the Economic and Social Council in Geneva in July. Mr. Boonyakiat emphasized the need to strive to meet the Education for All goals as well as the Millennium Development Goals.

D. Session III: Education and Sustainable Development (Millennium Development Goal 7)

1. Introduction by the Chair

63. Mohamed Aslam, Minister of Environment of Maldives, commenced the session by emphasizing that an educated population is essential for sustainable development in any country. Minister Aslam pointed out that in this era when the governing of countries involves significant public participation, Governments should respond to the demands of the people. In order for Governments' responses in the form of development policies to be sustainable, the demands of the people must be for sustainable development. The panel was moderated by Mark Richmond of UNESCO.

2. Panellist presentations

64. Katsuhide Kusahara, Former Chairperson of the Education Committee for the Japanese National Commission for UNESCO, highlighted the efforts of the Commission in advancing education for sustainable development in Japan. The linkages between various themes and activities across subject areas were recognized. The ability to utilize and practice knowledge was identified as essential and not just acquiring knowledge for its own sake. It was additionally expressed that education is a process that is based on local culture that cannot be changed overnight.

65. Mr. Kusahara further highlighted the actions being taken by the Government of Japan, particularly during the first half of the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development. He observed that education for sustainable development is not only about school education but covers a wide range of action beyond the education sector and involves partnerships forged between different stakeholders. The three major steps taken so far were outlined as Japan's action plan for the Decade, and concerned inter-ministerial meetings to clarify objectives of the action plan, to build human resources suitable for promoting sustainable development, and the use of the associate schools network to promote education for sustainable development.

66. Regarding the Government's role in including education for sustainable development in education policies and incorporating its objectives in the basic plan of education, the suggestion was to mainstream education for sustainable development into the "causes of study" and guidelines for primary study, to be predetermined once every decade. The imperative for education for sustainable development to become part and parcel of education relates to education's necessary role in creating a sustainable society. Within school curricula there is need for integrated study which addresses interdisciplinary issues and with special emphasis on community and hands-on learning.

67. The development of an associate network to promote education for sustainable development and to promote peace and international cooperation through classroom practice was further detailed, recognizing that there are currently 8,000 UNESCO Associated Schools in the world. Increasing the number of associate schools networks has improved the process of working together with business and non-profit organizations. The organization of an annual gathering of associated schools to share lessons learned and best practices was a key initiative, in which the national commission of UNESCO has played an important role. It was suggested that the

priority area for the second half of the Decade on Education for Development should be to further increase the number of associated schools.

68. Mr. Kusahara emphasized that the holistic approach to education for sustainable development should necessarily involve a consortium of industries, Governments, academia and civil society, and that the government will support such partnerships in support of education for sustainable development. He informed the audience that in 2014, Japan will host the end-of-the-decade conference on education for sustainable development. In conclusion, Mr. Kusahara expressed that education for sustainable development is not education about but for sustainable development.

69. David Arore, Vice-Minister of Education of Papua New Guinea, began by commenting on the internationally agreed development goals that highlight the importance of the informal, as well as the formal sector in education, and lifelong learning, which is in line with the practices of Papua New Guinea. Mr. Arore reflected on the economically competitive and environmentally hostile world and the consequent need to promote ideas of conservation and awareness of climate change issues, for which time is allocated for government and local experts to talk about conservation measures. Over the last decade there has been a significant increase of enrolment, however, the data are not disaggregated and therefore do not explain which class of society this progress has mostly benefited.

70. Mr. Arore explained the lack of education of mothers as one concern that is irreparable. Furthermore, teacher education must be targeted to accommodate increasing enrolment, which is aided by the fact that the Government has allocated one fifth of the total national budget to education. In addition, those who leave, or drop out of the formal education system are supported by NGOs and donors to provide the necessary flexible and distance learning opportunities. Mr. Arore also highlighted that the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea has emphasized the teaching of basic life skills and the launch of 15 pilot project sites for community teaching. In conclusion, Mr. Arore further suggested that informal education should address pressing issues, such as sustainable development.

71. Camilla Croso, President of the Global Campaign for Education, provided a perspective from Latin America, with Millennium Development Goal 7 (A), calling upon States to integrate the principles of sustainable development into national policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources. She informed that in the Latin America region there is some debate whether the present concept of sustainable development is the best fit for ensuring this. There is uncertainty about how the term relates to development itself.

72. Ms. Croso recognized that the current pattern of growth and consumption is not sustainable, neither in regard to nature nor in regard to relations within families. Current consumption and production patterns are a cause for concern, and international environmental rights are still under consideration. She highlighted that this concern continues to centre on whether development should be measured according to economic output or human dimensions of development. In the Latin America region, a concept of the indigenous people is that "living well", and this idea is increasingly visible, such as in the Plurinational State of Bolivia and Ecuador, which have mainstreamed it in national policies.

73. Ms. Croso emphasized that in the Latin America region, it is not continuous growth that is propagated, but rather sustained growth that reaches and ensures a dignified life for all citizens. She made the case for a move from a vertical to a new horizontal relationship between development and nature, in which natural resources are not seen as being at the service of people. Ms. Croso expressed that "well living" is concerned with the present time, and therefore is in tune with human rights, and that the idea of "well living" is not linear but context-specific and without a blueprint. It was underscored that education is the cornerstone as it provides the values underpinning "well living". Ms. Croso suggested that schools must be sites which promote cooperation and should and include promotion of individual and collective rights, which would have enormous implications in terms of requiring new curricula and different pedagogy.

3. Open discussion

74. Mark Richmond, Director of the Division of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development of UNESCO, and moderator of the session, highlighted three key discussion points. First, Mr. Richmond addressed the mainstreaming of education for sustainable development into education; secondly, what types of education pedagogy are required, including the necessity to consider the different forms that education takes such as formal, non-formal, and informal; and lastly, how to build regional cooperation to advance this type of comprehensive approach to education.

75. Dr. Guevara commented that closer linkage and alignment between Education for All and education for sustainable development are desirable and need to be further encouraged. Additionally, Dr. Guevara remarked that, conceptually, from a community-based organization perspective the benefits of such an approach are clear. He pointed out that ministers from different ministries tend to work in silos, which is problematic. Lastly, Dr. Guevara expressed concern with the current paradigm of unsustainable development.

76. The representative of Indonesia addressed the multidisciplinary approach, particularly in regard to education for sustainable development. A good example was provided, which illustrated how during university studies in Indonesia, two months of village service are required that facilitate students' learning about what the real problems of particular villages are, and involves them in assisting with finding solutions. This programme normally involves a combination of students from different disciplines who come together with multidisciplinary approaches. Furthermore, it was pointed out that a national coordinator for education for sustainable development has been appointed, and that since then Indonesia has made rapid progress, of which the most crucial progress was at the highest level at the United Nations Climate Change Conference, held in Bali in 2011, when the one million tree programme was established.

77. The representative of Germany commented that for the education for sustainable development conference in 2014, the 2009 World Conference on Education for Development, held in Bonn, was a good model to emulate, in particular with regard to organizing innovative workshops, where many specialists put their knowledge together. Germany also emphasized the important role of UNESCO as the lead agency in these matters, and putting the responsibility on

UNESCO to get the two communities (Education for All and education for sustainable development) closer together.

78. Abdul Hakeem, Education Adviser and Coordinator of the Asia-Pacific Programme of Education for All, UNESCO Asia-Pacific Regional Bureau for Education, Bangkok, emphasized that speakers had stressed the need to change attitudes and behaviour in order to promote sustainable development and that, at the very core of this challenge was learning (and in some instances, "unlearning") and education. He further stressed that in order to ensure such learning, key messages relating to sustainability and all the Millennium Development Goals should be conveyed in languages that can be understood, highlighting the concern for addressing language diversity, the ability of various ethno-linguistic communities to understand, and the need for contextualization in a culturally diverse region of the world.

79. The representative from the European Commission reiterated that Education for All and education for sustainable development should be complementary, emphasizing that Education for All, which is about education of children, and education for sustainable development as content matter could realistically be integrated.

80. Mr. Richmond agreed with the European Commission's point of view regarding the integration of Education for All and education for sustainable development, but commented that this is currently difficult because the two silos are still using different discourses and stress different priorities.

81. Mr. Kusahara responded that education for sustainable development and Education for All are two wheels of the same vehicle, and one cannot stand without the other. On these matters, Mr. Kusahara emphasized the importance of relationship, linkages, partnerships, cooperation, harmony and interaction.

82. Mr. Richmond commended the panel for addressing many of the substantive issues and also for offering an interesting exchange involving many heartfelt issues, and turned the floor back over to the panellists to make concluding remarks.

83. Mr. Aslam expressed concern that we have become a very arrogant society that is less learned and not used to providing better stewardship, and that the current generation is overexploiting natural resources. Mr. Aslam highlighted that as we have become a learned society, the way education is understood and knowledge is passed on has changed a lot. For example, in Maldives, culture and parental upbringing influence the idea that natural resources, though to be used, should be conserved in the way they were found. Mr. Aslam warned that developing countries should not follow the same unsustainable path, and that the people must demand that their politicians do the right thing in regard to such issues. Mr. Aslam concluded by emphasizing the imperative that the cultural context of different sources of knowledge and tradition should be taken into consideration, such as the reliance on clerics in traditional societies versus dependence on the sciences in Western society.

84. Mr. Arore agreed with the statement by Mr. Aslam, reiterating his concern that global society's current path is unsustainable.

E. Session IV: Key Policy Messages for the 2011 Economic and Social Council Annual Ministerial Review

Moderators' summaries

85. Mr. Stelzer, Chair of the session, thanked the panellists and participants for contributing their ideas and comments throughout the day's discussions based on the various aspects of education and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Mr. Stelzer then invited the moderators to present the key policy messages for the 2011 Economic and Social Council annual ministerial review which emerged from each session.

86. Mr. Seth reported on session I on education and poverty reduction, making seven points in particular. Mr. Seth observed that education and poverty are strongly interlinked, that education is a fundamental right with income inequality among and within countries strongly related to education. He noted that girls are particularly disadvantaged. He stated that Education for All is not only an agenda for developing countries but for all countries since there is an important link between education and growth.

87. Secondly, there was an equal emphasis on rethinking education in the light of a changing world, including demographic shifts (Asia dominating in population growth) and technological shifts over decades (growth of the Internet and mobile telephony). The education challenges in this new world are guided by the basic principles of relevance, quality, equity and access, strongly oriented to context and applicable to real life.

88. Thirdly, the overwhelming focus on access and completion has to give space to the equally fundamental issues of relevance and quality.

89. Fourthly, there is need to forge partnerships between all actors, national and local, public and private.

90. Fifthly, educational outcomes need to give equal emphasis to cognitive and non-cognitive skills and efforts by the United Nations system to develop measurement tools for non-cognitive skills should be encouraged.

91. Sixthly, adult education and literacy are as important as education for children. Political will is needed as much as funding, and the approach should be flexible.

92. Lastly, Mr. Seth highlighted that demand and supply-side approaches should have equal importance. For example, Indonesia, through scholarships and conditional cash transfers, has made significant progress in family planning and schooling issues. Furthermore, the Republic of Korea shared its own experiences in recovering from the Korean War and extreme poverty, whereby knowledge and learning through education were keys, and highlighting how education kept pace with growth, resulting in more girls and women entering the workforce.

93. Dr. Cliff Meyers, of the East Asia and Pacific Regional Office of UNICEF, offered observations on the second session on education and health. First, there are direct links between education and Millennium Development Goals 4, 5 and 6 which go both ways. Education is considered the best investment for achieving these goals and the intergenerational benefits, particularly for girls, who when educated are more likely to seek professional health-care services and promote health care for their children.

94. In addition, without addressing the health and nutritional status of children, including malnutrition, hearing and vision impairments and the consequences of HIV, including children without parents, stigma and discrimination, it would not be possible to achieve Education for All. There is a need to address these key barriers to education and learning, through construction of proper facilities, hearing and vision checks, guest lecturers to discuss sexuality and reproductive health and other practical measures.

95. Secondly, health and education sector reforms are required, as illustrated by both Bangladesh and China. It is especially important that an equity-centred approach is followed by reforms that prioritize disadvantaged communities. Examples of targeted incentives, including school feeding programmes and child stipends, have been shown to have a direct impact on enrolment and retention rates, as well as improving the health, nutrition and HIV indicators for children and communities. Community ownership in setting the priorities is crucial to the success of cross-sectoral approaches, making the involvement of ministries of education, health, social welfare, and finance essential.

96. Thirdly, engaging young people successfully as partners and stakeholders places them at the forefront of changes that benefit themselves and society. Cooperation with young people, as well as with the civil society, faith-based organizations and the private sector, can intensify the reach of interventions and promote sustainability.

97. Fourthly, comprehensive sexuality education can help delay sexual debut, and for young people who are sexually active it can reduce unprotected sex, decrease the number of sexual partners, and increase the use of contraception, leading to a decrease in unintended pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV.

98. Fifthly, to advance the health-related Millennium Development Goals, education systems need to address gender and power dynamics that affect health, including the attitudes, behaviours and health needs of boys and men, and the relationship between girls and boys.

99. Sixthly, schools can be health-promoting environments for children and young people when they ensure adequate water and sanitation and safe structures and include school feeding, nutrition and deworming programmes for the most vulnerable. Clean water and hygienic sanitation is essential for schools and for the communities they serve.

100. Lastly, Dr. Meyers recommended that while promoting school retention and completion, education ministries can also ensure measures to reach children and young people who are not within traditional educational systems, which are often among the most vulnerable to poor health outcomes and risk-taking behaviours.

101. Mr. Richmond offered observations on the third session on education for sustainable development, giving first general points, then commenting on aspects of the political commitments, such as the implications for education practice, and some practical measures.

102. Among the general messages arising from the presentations was that human beings want more, as individual and as societies, and this is part of the problem faced in terms of the unsustainability of our societies and our economies. This is

related to how to harness appropriately the learning process for advancing sustainable development, recognizing that unlearning unsustainable practices is also important. It is necessary to address the capacity for finding solutions to these problems.

103. Mr. Richmond highlighted an additional general message that recognizes the existence of different modalities of engagement for education, the different levels of education, different types of and settings for education, and the need to integrate subject areas to create multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches. Furthermore, partnerships should be built between academia, civil society, government and the private sector, all in an effort to address the common goals of education for sustainable development. The principle of equity, in the concept of "well-living", and the related emphasis that sustainable development must be for all, was also addressed.

104. The recognition of the political role of education was discussed, noting that education is not neutral but must be part of societal transformations. In the face of current changing global trends regarding sustainability, the economy and the environment, education should be viewed as contributing to broad social transformations, not obstructing them.

105. In regard to political commitments, several speakers illustrated the importance of political will as vital to engaging society in the education system, and in particular in the challenges of sustainable development, recognizing that sustainable development and education are inextricably linked. Furthermore, it was emphasized that Governments must fulfil the needs of the people, and that in the presence of democratic processes within countries, there has to be an education of popular will as well as a well-educated political will.

106. Regarding the implications for education, Mr. Richmond underscored that securing sustainable development requires a future-oriented perspective which should transform education content and pedagogy, which is about learning how to be in the future and what to become. Additionally, the value of knowledge that is practically acquired was stressed, such as learning by doing and the development of non-cognitive skills.

107. It was further suggested that these recommendations need to be applied in concrete ways, such as in the example from Japan and the use of particular study materials, course agendas, teacher training, and achievement frameworks. Several specific practical measures emerged from the discussion, including the complementarity of Education for All and education for sustainable development, the associated schools network as a particular model to coordinate efforts and share experiences, and the potential for conservation as part of the pedagogical approach.

Open discussion

108. UNFPA suggested that additional attention should be given to reproductive health indicators and efforts to reduce the number of unsafe abortions, in addition to unwanted pregnancies. The issue of how to reach out-of-school youth was also addressed, and UNFPA welcomed the suggestion of emphasizing the role of actors beside ministries of education, such as other ministries, community stakeholders and NGOs.

F. Closing statements

109. Mr. Momen, in his closing remarks, expressed his thanks to those who attended for their contribution which proves invaluable in preparation for the 2011 annual ministerial review. On behalf of the Council and its President, Lazarous Kapambwe, Mr. Momen again expressed sincere thanks to the Government of Thailand for their hospitality.

110. Mr. Momen remarked that the day's discussions brought to mind a famous Chinese proverb, "give a man a fish and feed him for a day — yet teach him to fish and feed him for life," which symbolizes the message that education empowers, then and now. Mr. Momen emphasized that in this twenty-first century world, with the limitless potential for technology to transform learning, it is necessary to ensure that the timeless fundamentals are addressed correctly. For instance, when students graduate well-versed in reading, writing and math, the positive spillover, as has been illustrated, is far-reaching and long-lasting, dramatically improving young people's prospects for happy, productive lives.

111. Additionally, Mr. Momen highlighted the multiple positive benefits of addressing education, such as its effect on reducing poverty and increasing incomes. Furthermore, the benefits of education include children living to adulthood and mothers surviving childbirth, as well as people enabled through quality education to protect themselves from disease or to be more likely to seek professional help. With higher levels of education, societies tend to treat their members more fairly and equally. Additionally, perceptions of the environment also change, from something to be exploited to something instead which ought to be sustained and cultivated.

112. Mr. Momen emphasized that relationships themselves are collaborative affairs and, in this vein, education clearly can use a helping hand to address such issues as improving quality and expanding access, which is in turn dependent on ensuring that health needs are met so children and youth can make it to school in the first place, and in facilitating the successful transition of graduates to the workplace. Moreover, sustainable development likewise requires sustainable financing, and not only from Governments. For instance, poor families often need immediate (if modest) financial incentives to send their children to school rather than out to work. Mr. Momen reflected that such a comprehensive, multidimensional approach to education reform calls for forceful advocacy at the Economic and Social Council annual ministerial review in July, and expressed appreciation that the work at the regional meeting for Asia and the Pacific had strengthened such efforts.

113. Qian Tang, Assistant Director-General for Education of UNESCO, began his concluding remarks by expressing sincere gratitude to the Kingdom of Thailand for hosting and co-organizing the regional preparatory meeting, and the appreciation of UNESCO to Thailand for their steadfast support in raising the profile of education on the development agenda. Mr. Tang additionally offered thanks to all the panellists, moderators and participants for their valuable contributions, as well as to the Department of Economic and Social Affairs for partnering with UNESCO to prepare the regional preparatory meetings. The output from the Asia-Pacific meeting will be shared with the global community at the Economic and Social Council annual ministerial review in Geneva in July, which will review progress on education goals.

114. Mr. Tang advised that education lies at the cornerstone of human development, with its role as catalyst for achieving all other Millennium Development Goals. The positive and sustainable impact of investment in education on poverty reduction and overall human development has been well documented, with effects such as increased rural productivity and urban self-employment, higher levels of earnings in the formal sector, lower fertility, better diet and earlier and effective diagnosis of illness, food security, better child health care and longer life expectancy.

115. Mr. Tang expressed concern, however, that among competing priorities, education far too often does not get the attention it deserves on national and international development agendas. He highlighted the progress in developing the education agenda, including the reference to "education for all" in the UNESCO Constitution over 65 years ago, advancement of the concept in Jomtien over 20 years ago, and framing of the six goals in Dakar in 2000. Mr. Tang addressed the need to recognize that tremendous progress has been made, in particular as regards access to primary education. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the world is not on target to reach Education for All by 2015. The Asia-Pacific region has its share of challenges, illustrated by a high number of out-of-school children, some 26 million, and huge gaps in learning achievements both between countries in the region and within countries.

116. Policymakers, Mr. Tang underscored, need to ensure that education is given the priority it deserves. The cost of not investing in education is something that needs to be better presented collectively. The interlinkages among education, health, poverty reduction, environmental sustainability and gender equality call for a holistic development strategy, with education necessarily factored into the design and implementation of national development strategies and the acceleration of national development efforts. At the same time, there is need to align actions across sectors to ensure the overall coherence of sector policies and maximize synergies. This holistic approach needs to be developed at the national, regional and global levels. Mr. Tang recognized the day's discussions as having been a way to move this dialogue forward at the regional level.

117. In furtherance of this approach at the global level, UNESCO has more actively engaged in wider cooperation with the World Health Organization, on education and health issues, and with ILO and OECD, on education for the world of work. Furthermore, the heads of the five Education for All convening agencies, UNESCO, UNICEF, the United Nations Development Programme, UNFPA and the World Bank, are also increasing collaboration and establishing a task force on the Education for All agenda beyond 2015. Mr. Tang encouraged the need to actively pursue efforts to reach out to the private sector and civil society to establish stronger partnerships for education.

118. Mr. Boonyakiat expressed gratitude for the constructive contributions the meeting has made to the annual ministerial review. Mr. Boonyakiat further commented that it is no easy task to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, highlighting in particular the important role of teachers as well as the continued commitments of all Member States to work together. He stated that Thailand remains committed to the economic, social and sustainable development dimension of the Millennium Development Goals, and is confident that it will have attained all the Goals by 2015.

Conclusions and recommendations

- **Rethink education in light of a changing world, including demographic and technological shifts, and as new challenges emerge.**
- **Shift focus from issues of access and completion to the equally fundamental issues of relevance and quality.**
- **Forge partnerships between all actors, including national, local, public and private actors.**
- **Give equal emphasis to cognitive and non-cognitive skills and support efforts to develop measurement tools for non-cognitive skills.**
- **Promote adult education and literacy, as equally important as education for children, through mobilizing political will and flexible funding.**
- **Adopt demand and supply-side approaches, such as scholarships and conditional cash transfers.**
- **Address the health and nutritional status of children, including malnutrition, hearing and vision impairments and the consequences of HIV/AIDS, including orphans and stigma and discrimination, through the construction of proper facilities, hearing and vision checks and the discussion of sexuality and reproductive health.**
- **Follow an equity-centred approach by adopting reforms that prioritize disadvantaged communities through targeted incentives, including school feeding programmes and stipends.**
- **Engage young people as partners and stakeholders, so they can be at the forefront of changes that benefit themselves and societies.**
- **Cooperate with young people, as well as with the civil society, faith-based organizations and the private sector, so as to intensify the reach of interventions and promote sustainability.**
- **Reinforce the importance of comprehensive sexuality education and promote sexuality education to help decrease unintended pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV.**
- **Address the gender and power dynamics that affect health and education needs, including the attitudes, behaviours and health needs of boys and men, and the relationship between girls and boys.**
- **Transform schools to be health-promoting environments for children and young people by ensuring adequate water and sanitation and safe structures, including school feeding, nutrition and deworming for the most vulnerable.**
- **Reach out to children and young people who are not within traditional educational systems, often among the most vulnerable to poor health outcomes and risk-taking behaviours.**
- **Build partnerships between academia, civil society, government and the private sector to address the common goals of education and sustainable development.**

- **Adopt a future-oriented perspective that transforms education content and pedagogy, as a requirement for sustainable development.**
- **Consider the interlinkages between education and sustainable development and treat in a holistic manner, through better national and international cooperation.**
- **Recognize the complementarity of Education for All and education for sustainable development, coordinate efforts and share experiences.**